



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ISSUE BRIEF

What Is the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign?

From November 25 through December 10, 2008, the Offices of Population and Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and Women in Development, will commemorate the 18th annual *16 Days of Activism* campaign, organized by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

The *16 Days of Activism* Against Gender Violence campaign provides a forum for speaking up for support services for survivors, calling for greater prevention efforts, pressing for legal and judicial reform, and using international human rights instruments to address the issue. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) plays an important role in raising awareness about the effects of gender-based violence (GBV) on health and development and in working to address these issues through innovative programs.

This year's campaign calls for overcoming challenges and obstacles to gain long-overdue results in the struggle to end violence against women. It pays particular attention to social attitudes and policies that continue to condone and perpetuate abuses.



Why Address Gender-Based Violence?

GBV can pervade a woman's entire life cycle, beginning with selective abortion of a female fetus to female genital cutting to intimate partner violence. GBV is usually perpetrated by men against women and girls, and it can take many forms – sexual abuse, physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, verbal abuse, economic abuse, or beatings during pregnancy. GBV can also pervade the life cycle of a woman and can permanently damage her physical and psychological health, limiting her ability to achieve education and advancement.

The consequences of GBV can be fatal, such as homicide and AIDS-related deaths, or nonfatal, such as acid burning, bride burning, traumatic injuries, traumatic gynecological fistula, and chronic pain syndromes.

The effects of GBV on women's sexual and reproductive health are well documented and may occur through direct pathways such as when women are forced to have sex, the increased risk of violence faced by HIV-positive women, fistula as a result of a wartime rape, as well as through indirect pathways, such as childhood sexual abuse that sometimes leads to greater sexual risk taking during adolescence and adulthood.

USAID's Health Response to Gender-Based Violence

USAID supports stand-alone activities as well as programs that integrate anti-GBV activities and messages into broader health efforts. Emphasis is placed on prevention interventions such as community mobilization and behavior change communication activities to address and transform the underlying norms that perpetuate GBV. By addressing GBV, health programs may be able to enhance their effectiveness, enable women who have experienced violence to benefit from existing programs, and prevent the escalation of such violence. USAID recognizes the importance of policy and advocacy initiatives to ensure that plans and policies are informed by relevant GBV data; confront the gender inequities that condone GBV; and allocate needed resources for education activities and services.

Addressing Gender in the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

USAID is uniquely positioned to support multisectoral responses to HIV/AIDS and is a key implementing partner in the \$15 billion U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR), the largest commitment to the disease ever made by any nation.

Multisector responses to HIV/AIDS address the widespread impact of the disease outside of the health sector in high-prevalence countries. Accordingly, USAID is supporting programs in areas such as agriculture, education, democracy, and economic development. These programs "wrap around" HIV/AIDS interventions and mutually support the objective of reducing the impact of the pandemic on nations, communities, families, and individuals.

With regard to HIV/AIDS and gender, through PEPFAR, USAID supports the five high-priority gender strategies specified in the Emergency Plan's authorizing legislation:

- Increasing gender equity in HIV/AIDS activities and services
- Reducing violence and coercion
- Addressing male norms and behaviors
- Increasing women's legal protection
- Increasing women's access to income and productive resources

For More Information

Visit the Center for Women's Global Leadership at: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>

Read more about the *16 Days of Activism* at: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/news/16days/index.html

Visit USAID's Women in Development Web page at: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/

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